101 /4 cont./
175 French and English have been propelling their respective cultural
177 influences toward the heart of Guiana.

8. Since when I talk about these Indians I might seem
123 partial because of the great affection which I have for them
114 and which they similarly have for me, I prefer to yield the floor to the illustrious ethnologist of Stuttgart, who asserts that the Taurepán Indians are the most pleasant, intelligent, /5/ and even the most physically perfect among all of the natives whom he came to know in his many excursions through the South American continent.

159 In a propaganda article I recall having written: "These Indians are pleasant in their dealings, in their manners, and in their language; they are hospitable, they are suspicious but never hostile toward strangers; they have a great love for their land, for their rivers, and for the places where they live, and they are very fond of pondering its beauties and like it very much when others praise them."

Elsewhere I also wrote and must repeat here: "With regard to their intellectual qualities I believe, as do most missionaries, that these Indians are not dull of wit nor lacking in morality. They have undoubtedly an excess of imagination with the consequences thereof, this being a characteristic of all who live in direct contact with, and as though absorbed by, virgin nature. The lack of stimulus toward all that is outside their ancestral standard or canon of life has given rise to their being called lazy or indolent, which we believe an unjust bad report."

114 9. The ethnographic or racial characteristics of the Pemón Indians can be examined in these words, which in the interest
[262] of greater brevity I copy from Dr. Simpson: "They subsist
[276] principally on cassava and ají; and they use tobacco; they use
[411] blowguns and poison arrows; they poison rivers to catch fish;
[226] they build semipermanent houses and sleep in hammocks;
[342] originally they did not wear clothing or only a simple loincloth;
[513] formerly they practiced empollamiento /"breeding, hatching"/
[291]

/13 cont./

000 phenomena created little gods, in contrast to the reasoning which assures us of the existence of a single God.

Creative is this Indian imagination which models their character and fills the world with fantastic beings! /14/

Chapter IV

Are the Indians Sad or Happy?

31. Contradictory evidence. 32. Somatic happiness and psychological happiness. 33. Under a humble cloak.... 34. The joke. 35. Religious anxiety?

C
114 31. Humboldt says, speaking of the Chaima Indians:
● 157 "Taciturn, without joy, turned in on himself, he affects a grave and mysterious air. When someone has lived a brief time in the missions and when he has not yet become familiar with the aspect of the Indians, he finds himself tempted to take their indolence and the dullness of their faculties as an expression of melancholy and a propensity to meditate."

P Diametrically opposed to this judgment is Simpson's,
114 who, speaking of the Kamarakoto, says: "They are quite the
157 opposite of withdrawn and silent.... On the contrary, their chatter is interminable and their faces constantly have their emotions shining through. The usual expression on the face is
P a broad smile, and any amusing incident makes them burst
[522] out in loud guffaws. They have an acute sense of humor and are always joking. They are very inclined to tell jokes." (P. 600.)

P The difficulty inherent in reducing to a single category
128 all the individuals of a single tribe (however small it may be) is clear, not to mention doing it for different tribes, although

sharpener, the knob from the top of a teapot, and a small square of hard rubber or other plastic of unknown original use. The strictly aboriginal yaichi[9] is usually decorated with knitted cotton balls and tassels, tufts of down or colored feathers, and teeth, hooves and claws of animals. Small silver coins, reales and medios, are eagerly sought for this purpose and two women had somehow obtained holy medals, although they were entirely unaware of their significance.

Both the pregamsa and the yaichi[9] are undoubtedly aboriginal objects and the incorporation into them of foreign materials is a normal and inevitable phenomenon. The aboriginal kasuru-pregamsa was probably made of hard seeds.[135]

Women do not wear earrings[136] and few men of the central group do so, but many of the men nominally of this tribe but from more isolated places do. This may be further evidence of the so-called civilizing influence exerted on the central group by one or two sophisticated individuals of the tribe, but it is not surely so since ear-piercing is a matter of personal taste and by no means universal even among closely related Indians who have had no such influence. Even the men with pierced ears usually insert ornaments in them only on special occasions, such as dances. The piercing of the ears consists of a remarkably large horizontal slit in the upper part of the lobe, which must be a major and dangerous operation. One boy had lost the whole lobe on one side as a result of unsuccessful piercing, although the other side was successful. Pieces of cane are inserted in these slits, generally with a tuft of colored feathers at the anterior end, and pendants may be attached to them immediately behind the ear. The most prized type of pendant, panadaino[9], and one typical of the Arekunas although it cannot be of pre-Columbian origin, consists of a double strand of beads terminating in colored tassels and with a crescentic silver ornament, made from a coin by beating and filing, attached to the middle (Fig. 32A). Koch-Grünberg figures an almost exactly similar Taurepán earring (1923, Vol. III, Plate 5, Fig. 4). The ear plugs are usually held in place by tying a small twig in front of the ear lobe, but the two plugs are not joined by a string under the chin, as Farabee says they are among the Makuchis.

We did not see any men with pierced noses or lips, although these operations are still fairly common among related tribes, even where these have had more European influence than have the Kamarakotos. With the relative scarcity of pierced ears and of tattooing, the Kamarakotos show a definite trend away from mutilation of any sort, whenever this may have set in. Since it is true even of the oldest individuals, some of whom were born decidedly before any conscious imitation of European customs, it is by no means certain that any outside influence is involved in this, and it is more likely to be a reflection of the Kamarakotos mild, easily frightened, pain-hating character and their strong dislike of inflicting any annoyance on children.

135, 136 [see footnotes on p. 323, category 116 – Analyst]

461 would trade his labor for goods for his family rather than for himself. Among
465 the Indians themselves the employment of labor is not uncommon and is paid
[478] either by labor in return or by goods, such as baskets or other common objects of trade. For instance one man may definitely employ another (outside his household — those in the household are of course obligated to help freely) to help erect his house and in return will do an equivalent amount of work for the man employed or will give him an equitable amount of food, drink, or articles of trade. This practice contains the germs of definite class differentiation into employees and laborers, but such differentiation has not at all occurred as yet.
[556] Generally speaking, there is no pronounced difference in wealth between different households and no one man is much more likely to be an employer than an employee.

Crime and Punishment.

173 According to present statements, the ancient penal code of the tribe, if
673 an indefinite and unwritten customary handling of the problem of crime can be
[681] so called, recognized basically only one crime, that of being hopelessly undesirable, and one punishment, death. Judgment as to the undesirability of a
[682] [685] member of the tribe was based on the commission of antisocial actions, among
173 which unjustified murder, violation of fishing rights, and habitual thievery
692 were specifically mentioned. A household might take matters into its own
643 hands, but this was considered undesirable and the regular, one might say the
[627] truly legal, procedure was to lay the complaint before the cacique who judged its accuracy and gravity, but apparently without holding anything resembling
[696] a formal hearing or trial. If he condemned the criminal, he assigned the duty of executing him to any members of the tribe, such as the male complainants, and the sentence was carried out without further formality as soon as opportunity presented.

674 At present, the Indians say, crime is so nearly unknown that no regular
[681] system of punishment is required. It is easy to believe that serious crime is
[152] extremely rare as the amity of the Kamarakotos is amazing. Even when they
[273] were violently drunk no quarreling was seen, still less any attempts at physical injury. They are, however, human and it is incredible that no crime ever is
[178] committed. From answers to hypothetical questions as to what would be done if a crime should occur, it is evident that the old code is still considered natural and just and I have no doubt that it would be, and probably is, still applied if
685 occasion arises. Specifically, it was stated that unprovoked murder and serious
[682] violation of fishing rights merit death and that this should be administered un-
[696] der direction of the cacique but might well be undertaken by the injured house-
[627] hold on its own initiative. Theft, on the other hand, is now considered theoretically (and probably also in practice although no specific instance could be

539 776 roles can, however, be seen in the fact that Piaimá is commonly represented as a familiar of the piaches, although hopelessly dangerous to other Indians, and even as teaching the piaches their peculiar arts and spells.

Character and Habits

● 157 Much of Kamarakoto character is evident from what has already been said, for character is inherent not only in the social culture of a people but also in what they make and use, in what they eat and drink, and in how they talk. Of course Kamarakotos show marked differences in personal character, but it is quite possible to speak also of a tribal norm in this respect. Indeed it was our impression that they are more uniform in character than are most civilized communities, and this is natural because of the almost complete uniformity in their lives, lack of division of labor or differentiation of habits as between different household groups, frequent social contacts with each other, and fairly uniform genetic heritage.

157 171 [197] [266] The Kamarakotos are Caribs and the Caribs have a bad name historically. Many of them were cannibals and they have even given us our word "cannibal."[223] Many Caribs were quarrelsome and warlike, a scourge to their neighbors and a terror to the white invaders. Some of them, notably the Motilones, have not been conquered to this day and still exact a heavy toll of life from those who attempt to travel in their fastnesses. Such a picture is, however, completely 157 and ridiculously false as applied to the Kamarakotos. Their most obvious character traits, as we saw them, are mildness and gaiety. They are happy, affectionate people who seldom quarrel and seldom show the slightest sign of anger or of opposition.

Humor.

157 152 Kamarakotos are anything but dour and silent — they do not belong to what some popular writers in North America call the "ugh" school of Indians. On the contrary, they chatter endlessly and their facile emotions are usually obvious. The common facial expression is a broad smile, and any amusing 157 incident gives rise to gales of loud laughter. They have a keen sense of humor 522 and are constantly joking. Puns are in high favor (I have noted some on previous pages). A few other incidents exemplify the sort of things that the Kamarakotos think are funny (and we shared this opinion). The fact that a flock of chickens included only roosters gave rise to obvious comments, gaily received. When I had been measuring their heads and we were about to set off to visit "Kamarakoto," the enormous stone that is believed to be their petrified ancestor, I was told to be sure to bring my calipers (span about 30 centimeters)

223 [see footnote on pp. 332-33, category 116 — Analyst]
[text continues on p. 263]

157 522 because this would be a head measurement that was really worth-while. A young unmarried man taking a length of cloth for a woman's dress as part of his pay was surrounded by a crowd making robustly insulting remarks accompanied [824] [384] [302] by loud guffaws in which he sheepishly joined. Even a happy surprise that is not essentially humorous, such as unexpectedly encountering a tree full of ripe "caruto" fruits (used for face paint), is an occasion for long laughter.

There are two noteworthy differences from supposedly more civilized humor, and these are decidedly in the Kamarakoto's favor: we saw no case in which a physical injury or indignity was considered funny, and crude practical jokes and the startling or frightening of anyone were expressly avoided and considered quite the opposite of humorous.

Emotional Adjustment.

171 158 In northern Venezuela we observed that most members of the peon class are definitely neurotic.[224] Most of them live oppressed by anxiety, ridden by fear of almost everything around them, and in a state of worry with few and 158 brief remissions. The opposite is true of the Kamarakotos. No neurotic individ- [157] uals or states were observed among them. Anxiety and worry seemed almost unknown, and the whole tribe exhibited a degree of emotional adjustment that 155 could not be matched in any "civilized" community of equal size. It will not be a popular statement, but scientific conscience compels me to add that the almost complete absence of a formulated religion is certainly one element in this remarkably good adjustment, just as the burden of such a religion plays a definite and large role in the neurotic anxiety of the northern peones.[225] Another element, probably the most important, is the security and care enjoyed by the children, as noted below.

152 It is not true that fear is unknown and it is apparently, but not really, contradictory that the Kamarakotos are almost free of anxiety but are often afraid and have even been known to die of fear. They do not seriously fear [828] physical injury: what they fear is fear itself. They detest being startled and often show marked consideration in avoiding giving anyone a start or surprise. Playing peek-a-boo with a baby, so common with us, was never seen and might [754] indeed be considered a serious injury. They fear the kanaima, but in their stories of danger from kanaima the injury is seldom represented as inflicted by physical means but by a noise, or similar thing, that merely startles and frightens [539] the victim. I have noted the curious and revealing fact that in their version of the widespread "stachelsitz" (spiny bench) legend, the bench is not spiny at all and the damage is inflicted by fright and not, as in almost all other known versions of this story, by physical pain.

224, 225 [see footnotes on p. 333, category 116 - Analyst]

Indifference to Suffering.

157 154 Indifference to suffering is popularly considered to be a universal Indian trait and is usually roundly condemned on moral and social grounds. The Kamarakotos show this (to us) rather unpleasing characteristic in considerable degree, but its basis is evident and it cannot be severely condemned if it is well understood. It seems anomalous that a tribe should be notably kind, mild, affectionate, and anxious not to inflict pain, and at the same time apparently apathetic toward the suffering of others, but the two traits are not really incompatible and are, indeed, largely different aspects of the same characteristic. They hate pain and, being sympathetic, dislike inflicting it. But sympathy means in fact (as the word does in origin) the sharing of feeling. To be sympathetic with a person in pain means in some measure to share the pain. The Kamarakotos tend to withdraw from pain, a perfectly normal psychological reaction, and the very fact that they are sympathetic makes them tend strongly to withdraw from a person in pain simply because it is painful for them not to withdraw. This, too, is a normal reaction, whether conscious or subconscious, and it is shared by most persons in our society. But in our society most of us carefully hide this reaction, partly in hypocrisy, because it is contrary to our social mores, and partly from the better motive of hoping to alleviate the pain of the sufferer. It is not contrary to Kamarakoto mores, more natural or, if you like, more primitive than ours, and according to their beliefs and knowledge, there is no good reason for attending to suffering because the ordinary person can do nothing to alleviate pain. If the pain is natural, nothing is possible but waiting for death or recovery. If it is supernatural, only a skilled piache can hope to remedy it. In either case withdrawal from the suffering person is not only perfectly proper but also the only sensible course, granting the Kamarakoto premises.

157 154 758 Despite this tendency toward withdrawal, the Kamarakotos certainly feel real sorrow for the suffering of anyone near to them and, within their own system, real consideration. The latter is well shown by the fact that when a person is ill they make every effort to do what little they believe can be done, notably to get a piache (or during our stay to persuade our doctor) to attend the victim. They do not sit by the bedside (hammock-side), prepare special food, soothe the fevered brow, and the like, because they see no benefit in these things, and they endeavor to continue their normal activities and to put the sufferer out of their minds as much as possible.

Children.

152 593 There is much and obvious personal affection and family pride. Kissing is unknown and casual embracing rare, but between husband and wife, or wives,

Swimming.

526 The men and, particularly, the boys are very fond of swimming and spend hours in the water. They paddle and splash around hilariously. It is peculiar that when seriously attempting to go anywhere in the water, they swim below the surface, staying under as long as a minute and crossing any of the streams in Kamarata (up to perhaps twenty meters) without coming up for breath. The stroke is a rather formless but effective paddle. They tread water and remain at the surface in deep pools with ease, but I never saw them progress on the surface for more than one or two strokes. This is pure conjecture and not entirely probable, but it almost seems that they have learned swimming by imitating fishes and that it has not occurred to them that they might swim and breathe air at the same time.

[481] [147]

Drunkenness.

273 Their herculean drinking bouts have been mentioned in connection with the dances that usually accompany them. Their alcoholic drinks are weak enough to require considerable perseverance in order to become drunken, but at these long parties most adults, men and women, do eventually achieve this condition. Such a party becomes disgusting, from any sober point of view, particularly as vomiting is an expected interlude between rounds, but at the one bout that I attended it did not become seriously disorderly. It is the highest tribute to Kamarakoto character that even with the whole crowd irresponsibly alcoholic, there was no quarreling, no abusive or even particularly noisy language, and that as much courtesy and thoughtfulness persisted as was at all consistent with their condition. Children of all sizes attended and were not neglected but had an equally hilarious time without drinking.[228]

[514] [578] [857]

[152] Such excesses have their aftermath and the only time that I saw the Kamarakotos surly and cheerless was the day after a week of carousing, when all were suffering severely and had lost interest in life or the neighbors.

Incendiarism.

● 157 372 311 A curious practice not mentioned in previous pages is that of setting fires in the dry season. The dry grass of the sabanas then becomes highly inflammable and the Indians delight in firing it, just to see it burn. Some tribes do this, ostensibly at least, to drive out animals when hunting or as a means of signaling,[229] but the Kamarakotos have, and give, no other reason than they enjoy setting and watching the fires. Flying over the country in this season, rings of fire can often be seen on every patch of sabana and after a party from the Caroni left us we could see columns of smoke in that direction for two days. The forest

372 311

228, 229 [see footnotes on p. 333, category 116 – Analyst]